



**Episode 896: Thaddeus Russell Launches Renegade University, the Opposite of Our Crummy Universities**

**Guest: Thaddeus Russell**

**WOODS:** When I say welcome back, I really mean welcome back – I mean, you have to think back quite a ways to the last time you were on. I think it was like in the 300s or something. It was a long, long time ago. And a lot of things have changed, all good, for Thaddeus Russell.

I want to talk about your podcast. I listened to your first episode with Michael Malice, and I thought, This podcast goes on too long. And then I started listening to it and I thought, Why did I ever think that about a podcast between Thaddeus Russell and Michael Malice [laughing]? It was great, and I told you in an email that you got the sound exactly right. It's crisp and clean and top quality right from the start. There are so many podcasters, like a certain host you're speaking to now, who look back on the early episodes and think, Oh, please, I hope nobody's listening to those now. But you can hold your head up high and say, Doggone it, I hope people go back and listen to all my early episodes. So tell me about the podcast *Unregistered*.

**RUSSELL:** Yeah, it's called *Unregistered with Thaddeus Russell*, and it is – the idea is to interview people who say things you're not supposed to say. And so that's including people like Michael Malice, who says lots of things you're not supposed to say. And my second episode was with Maggie McNeill, who's a libertarian sex worker and a leader in the sex worker rights movement, and basically I'd say the leading public intellectual for that movement. And I will have an interview with Camille Foster coming out later this week, on Thursday I think.

But it's about people, not just libertarians – those three are libertarians – but I will have people who simply break the rules of society, the conventional norms that restrict us, and say things that are not just politically incorrect, but taboo, and we really drill down on those issues and talk about how talking about taboo ideas really opens up freedom for all of us in terms of public discourse. It really widens what is possible in public discourse in America, as you know. There's a 3x5 card, right? So really it's a project to do what you're doing, which is to rip that card up.

**WOODS:** Do you have any limits that you would impose on yourself in terms of places you will not go on the show?

**RUSSELL:** Not many, I don't think so. For one thing, we curse. [laughing] It's explicit. But I am interested in exploring things like – and this is something, you know, that you

don't do on your show, and most people don't — you know, talk about sexuality. So I have a feminist pornographer as my guest in a couple of weeks, and she has said really wonderful things, actually, as critiques of feminism; namely, that feminists have focused too much on playing the victim and basically seeking to be protected by men, which of course is anti-feminist. And she says instead of being offended by pornography, I just decided to go make my own. And when I heard her say this in another venue, I thought, Wow, this is phenomenal. And she's the kind of person you have to just be very careful, you have to have a very fine-toothed comb looking through media to find people who are saying things like that, but that sort of makes a lot of people's head explode. So I'm having her on. Her name's Anna Arrowsmith.

And anyone like you who simply says things that college professors don't say, that teachers don't say, that you're not supposed to say if you're a parent, that you're not supposed to say certainly if you're a government official or even a business leader. It's just ideas that are outside the norms. And of course that's the theme of my book, *Renegade History of the United States*, in a sense, although those people weren't so much saying things as they were doing things that were prohibited or forbidden. This is a renegade intellectual show, so I'm looking at people who are willing to say things you're not supposed to say and, in doing so, again, widen the scope of what is possible.

**WOODS:** You are not a libertarian, but yet you have an incredibly open mind to the point where you're willing to listen to a lot of what libertarians say. And I know you've heard some episodes of my show and we've always had a good back and forth, good relationship together. So I'm curious to know a little bit about where you started and where you are now, because where you are now, I read a lot of your Facebook updates and I think, Yeah, right on, man, right, yeah. Like especially even leading up to the election, I felt like a lot of the things you said about Trump were very interesting, because your basic argument, if you didn't always put it this way, was: there certainly are numerous reasons you could dislike Trump, so why are you picking all stupid ones?

**RUSSELL:** Yeah, so okay, I'm so glad you asked both those questions. Let me talk about my history, and let's not forget about Trump, though; I want to get back to that. And you and I have a little overlap in our histories, by the way.

**WOODS:** Yeah, it's very interesting.

**RUSSELL:** Yeah. Well, yeah, so I am a — I can't remember if I said this on your show two years ago or three years ago, but yeah, so I was raised in Berkeley, California in the '60s, '70s, and '80s. My parents, until I was about 12 years old, were members of a revolutionary socialist organization called the International Socialists. And they were literally professional revolutionaries, meaning that they dropped out of normal society — they of course were educated at Chicago and UC Berkeley and my stepfather had gone to Exeter Academy. They dropped out and decided to take jobs as steelworkers and truck drivers and clerical workers in order to organize the working class for revolution. [laughing] So when I say that my parents were socialists, I really mean it.

And that was my milieu. I mean, growing up in Berkeley especially in the 1970s, we lived two blocks from the Black Panthers' house headquarters. We had people from the IRA from Ireland come and visit us and give talks. And I was always just around

lefties, hardcore lefties. And I have to say, even though I am an anti-socialist now, these were among the smarter of the lefties you would meet, because these were hardcore Marxists who were a minority even in the left, so that forced them to be particularly good in their argumentation. So I learned sort of that type of debate and that way of thinking.

**WOODS:** But also, that's really hardcore the way they lived. I mean, they could have had – these are people who could have had top-notch jobs, but they – I mean, I have to acknowledge the sincerity of their commitment. In the same way I think about Thaddeus Stevens after radical reconstruction, he wanted to be buried in a black cemetery. That was his identity. That was who he was. And so to hear this, I still – I don't agree with what they believe, but man, they lived what they believed. You've got to give them that.

**RUSSELL:** Yeah, I mean, I think they look on it now as a colossal waste of time [laughing].

**WOODS:** [laughing] All right.

**RUSSELL:** They dropped out of the moment pretty totally by the late 1970s. My parents have since then been sort of soft kind of, I'd say, social democrat, Bernie Sanders types, but they're not nearly as political as they used to be. I mean, it was interesting, but you know, we lived in poverty. I remember people coming to our house and cutting my mother's credit cards in half with the scissors out the door –

**WOODS:** Oh my.

**RUSSELL:** – and having checks bounced at the grocery store and, you know, the cops being called. They made a combined \$11,000 a year in the 1970s when I was growing up. And yeah, we lived in southwest Berkeley, which is essentially the ghetto in Berkeley. It's not of course like Southside Chicago, but it is definitely a poorer, working class neighborhood, mostly black neighborhood, so I was the white kid who got picked on and beaten up. For me, it was a tremendous learning experience and it certainly was formative for me.

And in fact, it kind of informed a lot of my work in various ways. I became interested in black culture and of course I understood that – I began to understand what its appeal was, and actually it's – I must say, its libertarian influence on American culture, which libertarians don't really acknowledge nearly enough, and that's one of my projects, is to sort of help educate libertarians about what black working class culture has meant in positive ways. It's a very long conversation you and I can have now or later.

But then I went to Antioch College in Ohio. So that was going from the frying pan to the fire. Antioch was – I was the conservative on campus because I was a socialist. It was dominated by anarchists. These are the kinds of people who would chain themselves to trees to protest logging, and these are the kinds of people who would be violent. Now we see them as Antifa – this is actually – I went to college with sort

of the first iteration of the Antifa in the 1980s. So this was a hardcore, super, super, ultra left place.

Now, it was also a place where hippies were. So we had a lot of public nudity, we had a lot of sex, we had a lot of drugs, we had a lot of partying, we had a lot of sort of living outside of conventions that were not political in the traditional sense. But that was the most exciting stuff for me. There were hippies who were not really political, and then there were the politicians, the people who were interested in reading books and going on marches and fighting cops in the streets. And I liked the latter less and less and I liked the hippies more and more. I liked the fact that they were simply interested in pleasure and a certain kind of individual freedom, and I saw them certainly as individualists. There were some, you know, communal rules among the hippies, but by and large, they were interested in smoking weed and hanging out. And I found that to be sort of utopian, and that also influenced a lot of my later work.

So you'll see my Berkeley childhood and my college years at Antioch in *Renegade History* in various ways. I was by the end of college committed to becoming a social historian who would do what you were supposed to do, which was to put labor leaders and civil rights leaders and feminists and radicals in the narrative, in the dominant American historical narrative. And you know, it was, like many people, as you know, in our field, that was really the mission, was really an activist mission more than an intellectual one. I knew what was right already before I'd even studied history, of course, and it was just my job to continue what people like Howard Zinn have begun.

So I ended up getting into Columbia barely by the skin of my teeth, because Antioch was a fourth rate college at the time. Columbia let me in without a fellowship, because – I don't know if you remember – did you – you got a fellowship –

**WOODS:** No, no, no, they had no money in those days.

**RUSSELL:** You didn't get a fellowship?

**WOODS:** No, I didn't. No, thankfully, the Intercollegiate Studies Institute paid for one of my years, because I got a fellowship with them. But it was terrible. And the people who did get the fellowships were – let me just put it this way: grotesquely unqualified, to the point that even the left liberals, who was everyone else, were grousing about it. I mean, I don't think any of these people even finished the program.

**RUSSELL:** When did you start?

**WOODS:** I started in fall of '94.

**RUSSELL:** Yeah, you were there – it's funny; you and I were there almost the entire time. I started in '91. You and I met only once very briefly in Alan Brinkley's office, but otherwise, I knew that you existed because, you know, occasionally we would mention that there was some conservative in the program. My God, what's he doing here?

**WOODS:** And I was at my most reactionary phase ever at that point [laughing].

**RUSSELL:** Yeah. And we thought of you – I mean, there wasn't a lot of talk about you, but my – certainly I thought of you, without having known anything about you except that you were a "conservative," was that you were sort of like, you know, an exotic zoo animal. You know, what's the giraffe doing here? I mean, why –

**WOODS:** [laughing]

**RUSSELL:** It just seemed to make no sense whatsoever. And I was just sort of curious. I mean – and of course, a basic fundamental assumption that there was something wrong. I didn't know exactly what it was, but there had to be some pretty grave personality defect that had caused you –

**WOODS:** [laughing]

**RUSSELL:** So I was, you know, if I had ever met you, I'm sure I would have gotten into your childhood really quickly to figure out why you have these ideas that, you know, are essentially either a product of psychological misdevelopment or just evil. More likely, just did something bad happen to you? Your parents weren't compassionate or something? But I was just always sort of taken aback by people on the right, both libertarians and conservatives, more than being moralistic about them. I just didn't understand how you could come to that. It was just so unnatural to have those ideas. And that was common. I mean, I think a lot of other people in the program viewed you as – bad. Just a bad guy. Immoral. You know, who had the wrong ideas. So –

**WOODS:** The funny thing was, by the way, was that I was so, on a personal level, likable, that it really made them uncomfortable, because they thought, "He seems to nice, and yet I know he's a moral reprobate. So how do I fit this together in my mind [laughing]?"

**RUSSELL:** Well, that's what I've always found with conservatives. I'd say – no offense to everyone listening right now, but less so with libertarians [laughing] –

**WOODS:** [laughing]

**RUSSELL:** But I mean, you know, libertarians I find to be the best intellectuals but not the greatest at interpersonal relations always.

**WOODS:** Not always, not always [laughing].

**RUSSELL:** And in fact, by the way, I have to say, having knowing the left, the cultural of the left very intimately – I'm basically one of the leading experts on that – I have to say one of the things I noticed when I started hanging out with libertarians many years later is they reminded me, just culturally and just sort of the way they interacted with the world and each other, with Trotskyists. I mean, it was just – they reminded me of Trotskyists. It seemed there's a lot of this infighting, there's a lot of this sort of quest for purity, there's this, you know, incessant desire to be right and to prove that you're right and –

**WOODS:** Can I ask you about this? Because you would know about this –

**RUSSELL:** Sure.

**WOODS:** I was wondering today, because as I told you, I was going to do an episode on libertarian infighting by myself. I think I'll do that – isn't that weird? I'll do an episode on infighting with no guest.

**RUSSELL:** [laughing]

**WOODS:** Just talking by myself. But on infighting, I've been trying to push back on this, saying that infighting is not uniquely libertarian –

**RUSSELL:** God, no.

**WOODS:** The Republican Party is full of infighting. There's infighting all over the – I'm sure that if I look at different kinds of Marxists, there's infighting. Although, the different Marxist organizations try to clamp down on factions, but then the factions just secede from the organization and start their own thing. So isn't infighting – in other words, I don't want libertarians – libertarians have a lot to reproach themselves for, but I don't feel like that's the main thing.

**RUSSELL:** Oh yeah, one of the funny things about you – and I listen to your show all the time, and I have for several years now. One of the funny things about you is that you have this fabulous sort of innocence about the – I know you sort of hate the left, but you don't know a lot about it, and I don't mean that as a criticism at all; it's just –

**WOODS:** No, I know exactly what you mean. I haven't been steeped in it.

**RUSSELL:** So for you to say – or you just sort of come to this idea just now that there might have been infighting among Marxists is hilarious for anyone who's been around Marxists, because that's all they do.

**WOODS:** [laughing]

**RUSSELL:** It's a religion, right, and so what they do – just like Christianity. It is split into infinite sects, and there's constant debate about what the founding texts say and what is the proper thing to do. My mother in the early '70s when she was – she was a leader in the International Socialists, and if you look up, you can see, this is – in England they've been a pretty big left group, and in the United States they had a fairly significant presence in the 1970s and '80s, and actually, they sort of took over the Teamsters Union for a while in the '90s. She expelled from the group several of her best friends.

**WOODS:** Wow.

**RUSSELL:** That's the kind of thing – for having the wrong line. You know, it was about lines, political lines. The group had to have a line. So it was democratic centralism, the Leninist idea. We will decide democratically what our position is on a particular issue, but once we do that, everyone must fall in line, and if you deviate from the

line, you are subject to expulsion – or worse [laughing]. Shaming and other things. But yeah, she did that, and then I think she was expelled, which is what happens.

So yeah, and I mean, we talked more about how – much more – about how awful and wrong Maoists and the Spartacists, which was another Trotskyist organization, were, and the Socialist Workers Party, which was another Trotskyist organization, much more than we talked about the Republican Party.

**WOODS:** Okay, but let me ask you this: did you have people who say what a lot of libertarians say, "We spend so much time on infighting. Why don't we focus on what holds us together?" I'd bet you didn't have as much of that.

**RUSSELL:** No, I don't remember any of that.

**WOODS:** Isn't that interesting?

**RUSSELL:** And in fact – you know, I stayed in the left for a long, long time, until well into my – actually, when I started Columbia, I was still very much a socialist and hanging out with socialists on the Upper West Side. And yeah, no, there was very little concern about that, and you know, it was really about doing the right thing. It's a religion, and it's a moralistic religion. Their ideas about economics, as you know, are purely moral. There's no economic – there's no mode of thinking in economics that is economic. It's moral. It's "we need a minimum" – the minimum wage is the right thing, and so it doesn't matter whether it will work or not; we need to do this.

So if that's your sort of – if that's the way you think to begin with and someone deviates from the line, they're evil. I mean, they've gone in with the devil. You can't work with them. You can't be with them. And associating with them in any way, sort of just, it sullies the entire movement, so we have to get rid of them. We have to at least separate ourselves from them. It's much worse. I mean, libertarians are bad, as far as I know. I don't follow this stuff that closely, but from what I know, libertarians are bad but nothing compared to the left.

**WOODS:** Okay.

**RUSSELL:** I mean, the left eats its own and always has.

**WOODS:** See, people? This is what I've sort of been trying to tell you, but with no real evidence [laughing].

**RUSSELL:** Oh yeah, oh yeah. Yeah, it's ridiculous. So I went to Columbia and started doing that, became a labor – I wanted – of course you're supposed to be a labor historian if you're a good Marxist, and that's what I did. But so I started studying labor under Alan Brinkley, who, you and I, he was our – he was your advisor as well, right? And he was mine –

**WOODS:** Yeah.

**RUSSELL:** Yeah, I loved hearing you talk about him a couple times, because your feelings about him were exactly like mine, which was that I didn't really learn anything intellectually from Alan, but he was just about the only principled intellectual I ever came across in higher education who, when I started to veer away – not just veer away, but really fundamentally attack his basic political values, he stayed right there with me and he read all of my stuff with a critical eye, but he was never dismissive. And he promoted me and he promoted me in all sorts of ways, in terms of he had me give a big paper to the faculty of Columbia, one in which – that was Eric Foner. Eric Foner, I gave a seminar – there was a seminar for faculty at Columbia when I had just started doing some work that became *Renegade History*, and I gave this big paper on it, and Eric Foner was one of the discussants. And he went through it and said, "This is wrong. Martin Luther King never said that. Walter Reuther never said that. This is made-up evidence." And then he walked out of the room.

**WOODS:** Wow.

**RUSSELL:** And I'm talking about quotes that are publicly available if you Google them.

**WOODS:** Yeah.

**RUSSELL:** Yeah, I could not – I said, "Eric, you're telling me that Martin Luther King, I made up that quote?" You can check that right now on your computer.

**WOODS:** Yeah.

**RUSSELL:** He walked out of the room. And it was an amazing moment, because that was – that was, first of all, the last time I spoke to Eric, and since then, he and I have actually had sort of indirect debates in the media, where I've been interviewed about something like Reconstruction and I give exactly the opposite view of the Foner view, and then they go and follow up and check with Eric himself and he sort of debates me with them, and then they come back to me and say, "Eric Foner said that you're completely crazy. What do you say in response to that?" And then we go back and forth. But so he and I have had this sort of distant hostility for the last 15 years –

**WOODS:** Well, take 30 seconds to make sure everybody knows who Foner is and who the Foner family is.

**RUSSELL:** So the Foner family, Philip Foner and Eric's father, Jack Foner – and there was a Moe Foner, and then Eric was the son. The three brothers, Jack, Moe, and Philip, were a Communist Party – well, I asked Eric once directly whether they were members of the Communist Party, and he refused to tell me, even though all three of them were dead and it was 1998 –

**WOODS:** [laughing] Gee, I wonder what that answer means, right?

**RUSSELL:** Yeah, no, I mean, it's obvious that they were. I mean, there's no doubt about that. Not only that, it's pretty clear that the family, that Eric's family was supported by the Communist Party, because his father ended up being just a sort of independent lecturer in times when you couldn't make any money doing that. So I

would bet you anything that Eric was actually literally raised by the Communist Party financially.

They were communists and blacklisted and, you know, in that way I am — Phil Foner in particular is a hero for me, even though I disagree with a lot of what his work said. Some of it I think is actually very valuable, and he's certainly worth reading. Phil Foner was the major intellectual scholar in the family before Eric, and he wrote dozens of books on labor history and black history and what you would expect. And he broke a lot of new ground. It was really important. But you know, he was a commie, and he was blacklisted and had a very difficult time getting any jobs. He ended up working at Lincoln University, which is a historically black college, when he easily could have been teaching at Harvard. I mean, he did have things to say. He was a serious scholar. And to this day, I use his work. But he was Eric's uncle. And Moe Foner was a major labor organizer, and Jack was a communist independent lecturer. And Eric was Jack's son.

Eric Foner went to Columbia in the 1970s, started out as a mathematics major — I don't know if you know that — and then he switched to history, and he became — he is now — did you know this? I didn't even know this existed. He is the Historian Laureate of the United States.

**WOODS:** That is unbelievable. Doesn't that summarize where things are now?

**RUSSELL:** I didn't even know that existed as a thing.

**WOODS:** No, I don't think it did exist — I bet he's the first person to occupy that.

**RUSSELL:** I think he might be, when I heard that. So Eric has been — so he's been the main guy at Columbia. He is widely considered to be the most important American historian of his generation. He's written several books. He specializes in the 19th century on Civil War and Reconstruction. I think his very first — his dissertation, which he wrote in 1969, which became a book, I think is actually a book that's very important and very good and very smart and well worth reading. I think —

**WOODS:** Is that *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*?

**RUSSELL:** Yes, I think so.

**WOODS:** Yeah, that is a good book.

**RUSSELL:** Yeah, I think that is a very good book.

**WOODS:** Yeah, and his book on Thomas Paine is actually a pretty good book.

**RUSSELL:** It's — yeah, I'd say that's a fine book. I don't think it broke a lot of new ground, but —

**WOODS:** No, but it's not something where I would throw it down and say, "A commie must have written this!"

**RUSSELL:** Yeah, and I mean, the thing is none of his work says that, and that's in fact why he's the Historian Laureate, because he's been — he has done this thing, which is really what gets you through in that world, in academia and the media, which is to be basically a leftist but sort of package your ideas in liberal terms so that *The New York Times* is friendly to you. So he can move between those worlds really easily. He's one of the few people who can do that very easily. He's pretty much a hardcore leftist, but he can get into *The New York Times* and he can meet with presidents and it's all good. He has a way of doing that, of translating left politics into mainstream discourse, which of course is one of the reasons that mainstream discourse, its roots are basically left-wing. He's a major figure in that process. So Eric dominated it. He was very good to me, and I taught for him a lot. We spent a lot of time together, and I kind of learned how to teach, not from him, but from teaching in his classes as a TA.

But anyways, so I started doing labor history like a good commie should, and I found that no one had ever written a book about Jimmy Hoffa, who was easily the most popular labor leader of the 20th century, whose union was the biggest ever in the United States, the Teamsters Union. No one had ever written anything about Jimmy Hoffa, whereas there were dozens — and you know this. There were dozens and dozens and dozens, maybe hundreds of books about every single little left-wing, commie, socialist, social democrat union ever. And I thought that's very strange; why would they do that? And it turns out Jimmy Hoffa was not only not a leftist; he was an anti-leftist. He was interested only in getting things for his membership, like wages and better working conditions.

And here's the big turning point in my whole career intellectually, Tom: I found out that Jimmy Hoffa was aggressive and accountable to his members, and he was famous for that, because he faced a lot of competition from other unions. A lot of other unions were trying to get the workers in his industries, in trucking and in warehousing, and so he faced this constant competition from other unions and union leaders. That forced him to be good to his members and to be accountable to them and their interests. And this is when the concept of competition as a good thing — I know it's within labor, so I know for you and a lot of your listeners that's not a good thing, but at least I began to understand that competition can make people be productive for society or some greater purpose. It never occurred to me, because competition was of course a bad word on the left. I mean, we never thought of it in any positive way.

And I ended up writing basically a libertarian labor history, the biography of Jimmy Hoffa, which is called *Out of the Jungle*. My dissertation, which became a book, is really the only libertarian history of United States labor. I also developed a whole argument, critique of the labor movement as being interested primarily in controlling members and in getting their dues and in accruing as much power for the leaders as possible. And so it's not a pro-Hoffa book; it was just an attempt to explain why he was the way he was. But in writing that, I began to understand how competition could be socially valuable.

And so then I turned. I began to turn. By the end of my graduate career in the late '90s, I started to — I began to think much harder about democracy, capitalism, markets, and started to move very fast away from the left, and just hating the left generally and how they operated. The culture of it I just found to be sort of constricting. I felt suffocated by it, didn't like it.

And I didn't know where I was going, but I stumbled across *Reason* magazine late into that and found some work, an article in the *Reason* magazine about how pop culture in other countries, in particular in the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc, really did a lot to bring down the communist regimes, because it was about people just wanting to have fun. It was that simple, but that was a threat to any authoritarian regime, because they of course seek control. They want people to be completely invested in the project of communism, to be good workers and to give themselves over entirely to the nation and to the commune. But when you're interested in rock and roll, which most or many Soviet youth were, that's sort of the antithesis of that. It's about having fun. It's about seeking pleasure, and most of all, it's about simply doing what you as an individual want to do. The state always hates rock and roll, always has, and they've viewed it not in a paranoid way, but in a correct way: as an existential threat to the state itself and to the governing regime.

So I said, Oh my God, who is this *Reason* and who are these libertarians? And if this is what libertarians are talking about, I have a lot to learn from them. So this is, into the 2000s, I am in my mid to late 30s. I have a PhD at this point. Tom, I had never heard of Mises. I had never heard the man's name. I had seen Murray Rothbard's name, only because he's in a few New Left books, but I didn't know anything at all about this name. And it's just remarkable. Not only that — by the way, the only economist I ever read in four years of college and eight years of graduate school was Karl Marx. You are protected from economic thinking if you're a leftist. They will make sure you will not read any economics, you will never talk seriously about economics. I, like most leftists, was a complete economic ignoramus after I had a PhD from Columbia University in a social science. This is very common.

So I began to turn. They began to see that I was turning. They didn't like it. I got a job, though, by sort of just a fluke at Barnard College across the street, which is the women's college. Began teaching there, and I began developing the ideas that are in *Renegade History of the United States*. They stupidly gave me a U.S. History survey course to teach as a lecture, so every history major at Columbia for four years had to listen to me lecture, and this is when I began to develop all these crazy ideas that I have now. They finally found out about it and essentially booted me out. It's a long story I think many of your listeners have heard, and I've written about it extensively. And I thought I was going to be homeless. I didn't know what I was going to do.

But I did think, I have these lectures that have this new take on American history that explain many of the freedoms that we have now as the product of people who simply broke cultural norms, historically, people like criminals and slaves and prostitutes and gays. And I said this might be a book. I didn't know, but I thought it might be, and I had a friend in publishing, and I told him what this might be about, and he said, Oh my God, that's a great book. And I ended up getting an agent, I ended up selling *Renegade History of the United States* for enough money that I could leave academia temporarily and work on the book, and it came out in 2010.

So by then I'm just adjuncting here and there, but I'm mostly sort of trying to develop a career as a public intellectual, which has been very, very stressful for the last several years. Now it feels like I've sort of turned a corner. I became pretty well known by a lot of podcast appearances, especially on *Joe Rogan*, and it began to feel possible, so I started my own podcast recently. And I'm launching Renegade University,

which is an attempt to create an alternative higher education system that does what higher education does not do, which is allow real debate about fundamental issues.

As a leftist in academia, you never really have to grapple with the big questions underneath all of your political ideas, and Renegade University is devoted to precisely that. So in all of the classes that I teach, I will give the opposing arguments from all sides on every issue, and I will have teaching with me in those classes or on their own in their own classes people of radically divergent views, people who are experts in their field, but who have fundamentally different takes on it. So it's about finding people who are not academia, of course, but who are experts in their particular areas to teach along with and debate people who are academics who do have the sort of traditional or standard left approach to history and politics and culture. And we're launching this year, and it's very exciting.

**WOODS:** All right, so given that it's kind of a soft launch now, do you want me to hold back on really promoting it for you? What would you want to do at this point?

**RUSSELL:** No, I mean, it's launching. It's launched. I have a workshop, a seminar that's coming up in Los Angeles in two weeks, and there are still a couple of seats open for that. And then there's a big event in Salem, Massachusetts August 4th to the 6th, which I'm co-producing with School Sucks Project, and the response to that's been incredible. We just announced it yesterday, and many, many people have already signed up for it.

**WOODS:** Boy, that is the — Thaddeus, that is the weirdest thing, because I was planning to make a — I love Massachusetts. That's where I'm from, and I was planning to take a couple of trips there this summer. One of them was going to be August 1st through the 8th —

**RUSSELL:** Oh.

**WOODS:** — and I was going to stay in Salem. It's the weirdest thing. I was looking on — I don't think it was Airbnb; I think it was VRBO. It doesn't matter. But we found this beautiful old house. It was the house that was lived in by the very first ever mayor of Salem hundreds of years ago. It's like a historic building. And the present owner rents it out to let people actually live in it. And we were so excited about it, and then we discovered that of course because it's an old-timey house, it has no air conditioning.

**RUSSELL:** Wow.

**WOODS:** Therefore, it is not an August house. So I don't know if I'm going to be in Salem necessarily — that's what was bringing me to Salem. I wanted to be in that house, doggone it. But that's really great. I mean, I love Brett Veinotte, love his podcast as well. So first of all, what's the website for Renegade University?

**RUSSELL:** So just go to ThaddeusRussell.com and you'll see Renegade University there and all the information you need. And the podcast is, as I said, *Unregistered with Thaddeus Russell*, and it's on iTunes and all the podcast platforms.

**WOODS:** All right, we're going to continue this awesome conversation after we hear from a sponsor I am very proud to feature.

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All right, I want to talk to you about some more things. Is that okay?

**RUSSELL:** Sure.

**WOODS:** We're going a little long, but I want to talk about some more things.

**RUSSELL:** Yeah, sure.

**WOODS:** We are going to get to Trump, so if anybody listening thought Woods forgot all about Trump, don't you worry. I've got my notes right here. I've got "Trump" in big letters with a box around it, so we will get back to that. But when you were telling me something about the hippies and they just liked to hang out and smoke weed or whatever, it reminded me of something that you said in your interview with Michael Malice and something that indeed comes through in your *Renegade History*: your feelings about the so-called Protestant work ethic. And I wonder if you could – can you flesh out your opposition to the Protestant work ethic?

**RUSSELL:** Yeah, fantastic question. So this has been one of my tensions with libertarians, but I think we can resolve it. And so every libertarian I've gotten to know has heard this, and a lot of them have read my work so they get it as well. So the Protestant or Puritan work ethic is the idea that work in itself, no matter what you gain from it, is good and godly and virtuous. So you should work even if you gain nothing from it materially. That was probably the sort of foundational idea of America all the way through the 19th century, and it still remains with us today. I think there's a lot of shame attached to people – attached to not working.

That is different than seeing work as a means to an end. Of course in the society we live in in this current context, to gain stuff, to get to make money, to have nice things, to accomplish particular things, of course you have to work. So this is not saying that you should not work and then being poor as a consequence is okay. It's the idea that – what I'm trying to say is that I think in all of us, because we're Americans, because this is a founding principle for America, I think in all of us, we have this shame about not working, which is not about sort of material success or accomplishments or attainments; it's really just this moral idea that you should be working and if you're not working you're not a good person.

And so it's funny, I listen to you talk about your work a lot – I mean, how much you work and have worked in the past in particular, and it sounds like you're mostly interested in accomplishing things. It sounds like you mostly treat it as a means to an end, which I understand and there's nothing wrong with that. That's up to you. But I also wonder with you and a lot of people who are essentially workaholics – and I, by the way, count myself among them – I wonder how much of the drive to work in us is from Cotton Mather. You know, that there's a little Cotton Mather inside of us telling us that if you don't work you're not a good person.

By the way, this is not an idea that you'll find anywhere else in the world. It's really pretty much in these sort of northern – some parts of Northern Europe and the United States, but it's very much an American phenomenon, and I write a lot about that in *Renegade History* about how profoundly Americans believe this, how much it permeated the culture, especially in the 19th century, but well into the 20th century, and still today. People get shamed all the time.

So for instance, look at very, very wealthy people in this country now. Some of them certainly don't do anything, but a whole lot of them work a lot, and for no reason. I mean, no reason in terms of they don't need to work to make any money. Bill Gates works all the time. Warren Buffett works all the time. The wealthiest people in this country work all the time. So did John D. Rockefeller, so did Carnegie. It's just amazing. And not only that, they didn't ever allow themselves to enjoy the fruits of their work. Rockefeller sat in his study all day, every day. He didn't go to parties. He didn't dress fancy. He made his children wear hand-me-down clothes. This is John Rockefeller, the wealthiest man in the history of the world. Carnegie gave away all of his money, and he worked all the time too. These people were all puritanical. It's quite a thing, if you think about it, and it's uniquely American. You won't find the richest people in other countries acting like that.

So it's something I think we should all think about. You know, how much of the drive to work in us is from that idea? And I think the Puritan work ethic really explains why Americans work many, many more hours than Europeans per day and per week and per year. I think it's a major part of why we work so much, and I think we should think about, you know, is that the life we would like to live? I want the good stuff, the nice stuff that comes from working, but I want the good stuff and to work less. I want my cake and to eat it too, and I think that's actually possible if we just sort of can separate that moralism, that shame about work.

**WOODS:** All right, let me jump in. I just want to think out loud about this, because if you've heard me talk about work, you may also at some point have heard me talk about how much I regret this, that I worked way too much and that – I just told you about a vacation I'm excited to take. I would not have said that five years ago, because I would have resented going on vacation because I have things to do and this is – you know, stupid and frivolous people go on vacation. I mean, I was just a – I had this very pleasant public persona, but I was just an SOB when it came to my time, because, "Why, I'm doing important work here," you know what I mean? It was just awful, a terrible person.

And it's to the point now where I luxuriate in thinking about my vacations and planning them and I can't wait to go do this and that. That's definitely changed, because I got to a point where I worked so much, I had taken on a project that was so overwhelming that it crushed that part of me. It just made me think, You know, I actually don't like doing this and that has to play some part in my life. Whether I like doing it or not has to be part of the question. So to a degree, I get what you're saying and I'm sympathetic.

But there is still a part of me that, you know what? Yeah, I am contemptuous of the sort of – Like, I have to watch a lot of kiddie movies because we have a lot of kids. My three-year-old is absolutely hooked on *Finding Nemo*. We have the DVD; she watches it

all the time. And there's that freaking turtle at the end, right, and it's like, "Come on, dude. Let's swim to the — " And I mean, he's just the worst — I mean, for some reason, I want to wring his neck. It's the whole, "Oh, nothing really matters. Let's just — " I mean, part of that I think is being a libertarian, because I know that the people who are exploiting and ripping me off want me to have that attitude of, "Hey, don't get worked up about anything. Just be laid back." And parentheses — and let them rip you off and do what they want. You know, hey, be happy. Nope, I'm going to go after these SOB's and I'm going to denounce them and I'm going to work at it, doggone it. So I just, when I see this attitude of: my highest aspiration in life is just to sit and hang out, then that just makes me think, Then why weren't you just born a chicken? They hang out all day.

**RUSSELL:** [laughing] Yeah, so it's funny. I think that turtle represents surfers and surfer culture. I think he's sort of like a California dude surfer-type, as I recall, from the movie.

**WOODS:** Yes, exactly. It's like pushing every button I have.

**RUSSELL:** Yeah, so I mean [laughing] — so it's funny, because surfers are my inspiration.

**WOODS:** [laughing] Right.

**RUSSELL:** Yeah, I mean, in a way they are sort of perfect to me, because — well, no, here's the problem with surfers. They're broke. So I don't want to be broke [laughing]. I want to have that life and have some money, and — here's the thing, libertarians and everyone: we can have our cake and eat it too. Why? Because of technology and innovation. So in Europe, they work much, much less than we do and have essentially the same standard of living, despite the social welfare state. I mean, essentially — you know, you can get basically the same stuff and, you know, people live essentially the same way materially, right? They have access to the same stuff. But they work hundreds of hours less per year than we do. I mean, people should look at the statistics. It's shocking. I mean, hundreds of hours less than Americans do.

So people like surfers, like that turtle and surfers and slackers and slaves and many of their descendants who were famously not interested in the Puritan work ethic for obvious reasons — because it was never an incentive to work and they weren't Calvinists when they got here — people like that, they were broke, and so I wouldn't advocate emulating that if you don't want to be broke. But they have always offered an alternative way of thinking about work. So they are the ones who challenged the Puritan work ethic simply by not abiding by it, and they always offered that alternative. They offered a different way of thinking about it.

So the weekend, that concept didn't exist well until the 19th century. There wasn't a weekend, no one had that idea, it wasn't thought of as a necessary thing or a good thing. In fact, it was thought of, if at all, as a bad thing. That changed I think in the 20th century, and now — well, less and less in some ways, but we still — we do think that we are sort of entitled to a weekend, that it's okay to have leisure time. That was not a thing in the 19th century, and my argument in *Renegade History* is that it wasn't because of the labor leaders who get all of the credit for that, and it wasn't the labor

laws that get credit for that; it was — I think you're right in part that it was simply economic development. But with all the economic development in the world, if everyone thinks that work is godly, there won't be a weekend either. We'll have more stuff, but we'll be working all the time. My argument is that there were a lot of people — and immigrants also didn't have this idea of the Puritan work ethic because they came from countries where it didn't exist, so when they got here, they said, Americans think you should work all the time even if you don't get paid for it; this is ridiculous. So those people in American history I argue in *Renegade History* are the ones who really created the weekend by attacking through their behavior this idea that work in itself is virtuous. That's why I think you should go back, look at *Finding Nemo* again, and you'll see that turtle in a new light.

**WOODS:** No, I still have my sledgehammer out.

**RUSSELL:** [laughing]

**WOODS:** I'm sorry. I'm sorry, on this one I can't be budged.

**RUSSELL:** Oh, I was going to say —

**WOODS:** Why weren't you born — look, cows hang out and graze all day. That's all they do, is hang out. But I wasn't born to be a cow. I was born with greater potentialities than that.

**RUSSELL:** Well —

**WOODS:** Like, what am I missing about that?

**RUSSELL:** Well, I was going to say, it sounded like you raised a different issue about that turtle, that he was also not interested in fighting oppression, right?

**WOODS:** Or he wasn't interested in anything intellectual at all, and yet, that's the thing, if he's a talking turtle, then he's a very, very unique one, and he ought to — he ought to use what he has. The great talents and the potentiality that he has, he ought to use. I feel like anybody who just sits around and does nothing all day might as well have been a lizard or a fish or whatever.

**RUSSELL:** Yeah, I mean, I think — so, you know, it's a Christian idea, and you and I have big differences on that. I mean, you're a Christian and I'm not. And I don't moralize against it. I don't think there's anything bad about being a Christian. But that's the foundation — it's interesting. That's the foundation of, of course, not only the Puritan work ethic, but it's also the foundation of progressivism and a lot of left-wing politics. My parents' socialism and — every socialist I've ever known is essentially a Christian in terms of their moral values, believe it or not, which is that you should sacrifice yourself for the greater good, for the commune. You should live in poverty like my parents did so that we can all be equal under God's eyes. It's actually — Christianity is to me — and Michael Malice, by the way, makes this same argument — is at the basis of left politics, and so this idea, this asceticism, that we should sacrifice

our own pleasures and interests and individual freedom for the greater good, for the community, Christians really perfected that and –

**WOODS:** Yeah, but the Christian idea there is not that there's anything wrong with or bad about the created world. That's a heresy. The idea is that the created world is very good and that's why it's hard to sacrifice these things. But in doing something that's difficult, you're doing something that's meritorious in God's eyes, because you're putting things that are spiritual above things that are material. It's not to say that it's evil to enjoy an ice cream; it's that – like in any case, like if I, when I was 18 years old, let's say, and I was wanting to ask out some girl and I had gone out of my way to get her flowers even though it was pouring rain, well, there is a little aspect of the fact that the sacrifice involved makes the gesture all the more meaningful. Like, wow, you had to go through all that just to show your love for me and your devotion to me. I think that's the – and of course there's no thought of forcing other people to act this way. There's no – the idea was not that everybody should be a monk. These are supererogatory works only for certain people.

**RUSSELL:** Well, I think we differ and I think what we should do is you and I should co-teach a course in Renegade University on the Bible –

**WOODS:** [laughing]

**RUSSELL:** On the Bible. I mean it; I mean it. Because that's exactly the kind of thing that I want to do, is read – because we'd have to read the text to really have this argument, right?

**WOODS:** That's right. But you know what's interesting to me is I thought what your Renegade University was going to be was basically you speaking about the stuff that you've been talking about in your book. I had no idea that you had this kind of ambition with it –

**RUSSELL:** Oh yeah.

**WOODS:** – of competing ideas and stuff. I mean, that – I didn't realize that at all. That is really thrilling and exciting to me.

**RUSSELL:** So if you look at – I have a trailer video for Renegade University online. You can go to YouTube and see it and go to my website and see it. And you'll see in the second half of the video – it's only two minutes long, but in the second minute, you'll see clips from old debates like *Firing Line*, like William F. Buckley debating James Baldwin and –

**WOODS:** Those were fun to watch.

**RUSSELL:** Yeah, and Camille Paglia debating Betty Friedan and Michel Foucault debating Noam Chomsky, and I mean, it's – oh, Murray Rothbard makes an appearance. He's not debating anyone of course because no one would ever debate him, but that's exactly what I want. I love debate. I love debate. Oh, and I heard about your thing at Yale, at the Oxford Union, I think it's called?

**WOODS:** Oh, yeah, yeah, the Yale Political Union, yeah.

**RUSSELL:** Political Union, yeah, right. And it sounded like, wow, wouldn't it be amazing if another college did that? I mean just one other college. As far as I know, Yale is the only place that does that. That's what I expected to find in college.

**WOODS:** Yeah, of course.

**RUSSELL:** When I got to college, I thought that's what it would be. I thought I'd sit in a room and watch like the three greatest philosophers debate with each other about something.

**WOODS:** [laughing] Right, yeah.

**RUSSELL:** And I never — so then ten years later, I get my PhD and I had never seen that once in a classroom.

**WOODS:** We've got to make one of those memes where, "What I thought college was," and there's a picture of — and what is actually is is the next picture —

**RUSSELL:** Yeah, what I —

**WOODS:** Yeah, go ahead.

**RUSSELL:** Really quickly. So I mean, I was starved for that and all I was getting was left-wing politics, and I thought that was basically correct and I was doing the right thing. But there was something in me, even when I was a freshman at Antioch College in the 1980s and a socialist, thinking, "I'm not being tested." These ideas are not being tested here. And so what I would do — this is true — several times a week, I would just go to the library and I would get the *National Review* off the shelf, and I would sit down in the library surrounded by all these anarchists and communists, and I would not read William F. Buckley's columns, I would study them. I would study them line by line and think, "How is he writing this? How is he constructing this argument? Where is the evidence here? How is he doing this?" Because I thought he was the best at that. And he was. He was very good at it.

And I think that was really the seed of everything I've been doing since then, was sort of this like curiosity about, hey, what's around the corner? Are we sure we don't want to look around the corner there? Are we just going to stay on this side of the street the whole time? I mean, this is great and I know we're doing God's work here, but isn't there — I know that there's another street over there. We're not even going to look down it? And that's really what higher education has become. You just stay in the same street and you have these little tiny arguments about microscopic differences. There's no questions about fundamental issues.

**WOODS:** Right, totally, totally, totally. Now, that reminds me: when Judge Napolitano used to have his show *Freedom Watch* on the Fox Business Network, his producer was Austin Petersen, and I kept badgering Austin and I never — Austin used to reply to me except when I would make this suggestion, and yet this was by far my best suggestion.

What I liked the best about the *Firing Line* debates was when they would have three-on-three debates and they would be long, an hour or two hours. And it would be somebody like Buckley and then somebody comparable to Buckley on the other side, then an academic on each side, and then a celebrity. So I remember they had like Dennis Weaver against Charlton Heston. But it would be three on three. And they would have opening statements; they would cross-examine each other. It was thrilling to watch. Michael Kinsely used to moderate them.

So I suggested to Austin Petersen, if the Judge could propose to Fox, Look, I want an hour or maybe even 90 minutes, and we're going to get the top three – we're going to get Ron Paul, we're going to get Michael Scheuer – we're going to get three noninterventionists and we're going to get the top three neocons, and they are going to debate it and cross-examine each other, not in little sound bites but for 90 minutes, you're telling me people wouldn't tune into that? Especially with the Fox Business Network, whose ratings are kind of iffy? That would have been by far the most viewed thing they ever aired.

**RUSSELL:** Oh yeah.

**WOODS:** But there's just no interest in that anymore.

**RUSSELL:** Yeah, I don't understand it. I mean, there was *Crossfire* on CNN, which was –

**WOODS:** That was –

**RUSSELL:** a so-so attempt.

**WOODS:** For a half-hour – yeah, it was a half-hour show and it –

**RUSSELL:** Half-hour, right.

**WOODS:** – and after commercials, 23 minutes. Considering that, they did the best they could. At least the thought was there.

**RUSSELL:** Well, that's exactly – yeah, so there will be – so Renegade University will have many courses taught just by me, but that is what I want to do also. I want to have exactly what you just described. I want to have the best minds from different schools of thought go at it.

**WOODS:** See, after listening to your interview with Michael Malice and seeing how long that went, I think that's just somehow invaded my brain. It's made me think, Well, I guess when you talk to Thaddeus Russell, you just talk for a long time. So I'm still doing it. So we have to at least hit on Trump before we wrap up here.

**RUSSELL:** Sure, sure.

**WOODS:** And look, I've already talked about what he's been up to since becoming president. I just did an episode with two people arguing about that. I'm a little bit

more interested in the lead up to who he wound up becoming, because that was an interesting cultural phenomenon about – I mean, there were some things to – he was a big question mark. There's no question about that. and there were some things about his message that you would say, Well, eh, I'm not so sure about how I feel about that. But there was something weirdly disproportionately crazed about the – especially because so many of the complaints about them, they were dumb complaints that could have been made and probably should have been made against all his predecessors. But we've been made – because somehow we've been educated in his bubble where we have these great presidents who did only good things – the great presidents did horrible things half the time, but we have this thought that therefore Trump must be this terrible divergence from the norm, because we've been taught this comic book version of the norm.

**RUSSELL:** Right, so as you know, Americans have never really cared much about bombing people in other countries. So that's, you know, going to be sort of a secondary issue at best. So what his position is on that, meh, whatever. So here's what I think has been going on with Trump primarily in terms of the reaction to him. It is back to puritanism. Major Puritan values are the work ethic, that you must work no matter what you gain for it. You must be humble and modest, both in your demeanor and your appearance. And you must be a member of a nuclear family and not stray from that. You must be repressed sexuality. You must never talk about sex.

And look which values that Trump drove a truck through, right [laughing]? He is the rich guy who didn't really earn his money because his dad gave him his money, and he talks about sex all the time, and he lives in a gold-plated palace on a throne with his model wife next to him. So Trump is the anti-Puritan. He is radically violating the central values of American culture. No one has ever – I think I'm the only person who has said this, but I think that is what's driven most people completely crazy about him.

Now, what happened was those values were the 18th and 19th century values. In the 20th century, there were some more values that were added to it, to sort of central American mainstream cultural, which have to do with race and gender, which are that we must now speak of black people and minorities as a protected class who have been harmed in the past and must not be offended in any way now, that any word that might in any way suggest that you don't absolutely revere everything they say – in other words, they must be patronized. They must be patronized and treated like children. That became added to the dominant American culture, what was respectable. Respectability started to include that.

And then same with women. Women must be treated as children, essentially. We can't say anything that might offend their delicate ears, which of course is sexist in itself. No one ever questions that, but that's essentially what feminism has become. It's become an attempt to get men, through the state and through powerful institutions, to protect women, to not say anything that might offend women, to not talk about sex around them because they can't handle that, to not say anything that might call into question any particular woman's ability to do a particular job, whatever. So those ideas about gender and race were added to sort of the dominant, respectable American culture.

And Trump, guess what: drove a truck right through those values as well. And so he says – he's just violating all of the etiquette. He's violating every rule of the etiquette. He doesn't care. He's unashamed about it, and it is my firm belief that that is why the left went absolutely – not just the left. Conservatives too, right, because they adhere to these values too, a little less – they're only slightly less attached to the ideas about race and gender, but they're there too. As you know – I've heard you say this, that even the right wing is basically politically correct on these issues as well. Trump just doesn't care. He's not of that culture. He came from outside the culture. He's a wealthy man from New York City, but for whatever reason, he never was of that culture.

And that culture, by the way, was created in the 19th century and the 20th century, created and cultivated and protected and distributed, basically, in colleges and universities. There is a divide – this is the story that needs to be told. There, I believe, is a divide in the United States, a fundamental divide between those who went to college and are of the college culture and those who did not go to college. And that was what the election was all about to me. It was about the people who were never acculturated into this very weird way of thinking about the world in colleges and those who didn't.

I mean, the people who voted for Trump clearly had – simply weren't of that. And those people are considered to be barbarians from the ancient past. Shelby Steele has a great piece on this in *The Wall Street Journal*, in which he argues that that's what liberalism has become. It's become a way of identifying the people who represent old America, old racist and sexist America and then identifying them as those who must be vanquished, destroyed. They are to be thrown away. They can't be taken seriously. That's what Trump represented to people. We are afraid, we are terrified that, oh my God, we're all going to become America of old. We're all going to become Bull Connor and the old racists and sexists. This is what Trump represents. This is what's made the left's heads explode.

**WOODS:** That is an analysis I have not heard before, and I think, I'm sure you would at least partly agree, some of that has got to be beneath the surface and unconscious, because they're not often articulating that.

**RUSSELL:** It's entirely unconscious, yeah.

**WOODS:** Yeah.

**RUSSELL:** So I can't prove it of course, but just look at it, just think about what are the rules of etiquette, social etiquette in the United States. He violates every single one of them. And if you look at what people say about him mostly, it's not his policy in Syria. It's not even his policy on trade. It's not really his policies on immigration. It's that he says the wrong things about people. He says things that are rude that you don't say in polite company that everybody thinks but no one says. That's what – if you look at the actual criticism and sort of the harshest criticism, it's all about that. It's about Trump Tower; it's about how his hair is; how his wife, how she dresses. It's about his misuse of words, his use of words that might be offensive. It's all these things that are not about policy; it's about his culture. It's about the culture that he represents. He's the culture that we are ashamed of that is of the old America that we thought we

got rid of but, my God, it's coming back. Oh my God, we are all going to become the bad, evil America that we read about in our history books.

**WOODS:** But then there were all these bizarre predictions of what was going to happen to people. I mean, here he is obviously by far, far and away the most pro-LGBT candidate the Republican Party has ever nominated, and at least close to the most that even the Democrats had ever nominated. I mean, certainly the 1996 version of Bill Clinton was to the right of Trump on these issues. And yet I'm hearing things like, "Yeah, he's probably going to round us all up in internment camps." *Probably?* Like, you think that's likely?

**RUSSELL:** Right, totally hysterical, but that's because, I believe, Trump is unabashedly masculine. That's again part of the etiquette. You're not supposed to be masculine in that way anymore. That is not okay. And what it does is it signals that you again are of the old, imagined America, when men raped women with impunity and it was completely patriarchal and we lived in *Mad Men*, where bosses hit on their secretaries and had affairs with them, etc., and they hated gays, etc.

So I think that's really why. I think that's why they have these ideas, these extreme ideas that we were all going to go to concentration camps – or the gays would go to concentration camps, because we were going to go back to that – I've seen people say this. This is a return, they said. This is a return to America of the 1940s and 1950s, however they imagine it, because Trump is unabashedly masculine. He talks about women and their bodies and he talks about his sexual desire and he – you know, he's being a manly man and he loves hanging out with generals and he gets turned on by their uniforms and he's about being tough and throwing people physically out of his events. And that is why they think he is the devil. He violates all the norms of polite society, and polite society is now – polite society is defined by, in large part, left-wing ideas about race and gender.

**WOODS:** Wow, now this makes me want to talk for another two hours, but we've got to wrap it up. So I want people definitely to talk about [ThaddeusRussell.com](http://ThaddeusRussell.com). And yeah, I'm going to get some emails. Let me tell you that right now.

**RUSSELL:** Oh, good.

**WOODS:** I'm going to get some emails from people saying, You know, I can't believe Thaddeus said X, Y, or Z. But you know? I get people who come on who say, Woods, you need to have more diverse people on your show. Okay, then as soon as I do, it's, "Hey, what's the big idea [laughing]?"

**RUSSELL:** See, here's the funny thing, though. I agree with you on economics. I've learned from you so much about economics, and I have been totally won over. There's not a word out of your mouth about economics and the Austrian school that I don't agree with.

**WOODS:** Wow, how about that?

**RUSSELL:** And so what are you going to do with that?

**WOODS:** I honestly don't know, other than, wow, if I can win him over on economics, maybe I can get him on throttling that turtle [laughing].

**RUSSELL:** [laughing] Leave the turtle alone, Tom.

**WOODS:** [laughing]

**RUSSELL:** He's going to help you. He's going to help you enjoy life. I promise.

**WOODS:** Yeah, and if it turns out — Look, I'm still in the midst of an evolution of my thinking on this, so let's just wait. Let's revisit the turtle question, let's say, around 2020.

**RUSSELL:** Okay.

**WOODS:** When everybody else is looking at the presidential race, you and I will revisit that.

**RUSSELL:** Sounds good.

**WOODS:** Well, best of luck with this. This is great. When it has the real, full-blown, just absolutely all-whatevers-firing launch, then I'd like to talk more about Renegade University, but people can find out about it at [ThaddeusRussell.com](http://ThaddeusRussell.com). And of course your books, I mean, *Renegade History of the United States*, I'm going to have that and your Jimmy Hoffa book too, I'll link to both of those at [TomWoods.com/896](http://TomWoods.com/896). All right, thank you, Thaddeus.

**RUSSELL:** All right, thanks, Tom.